The Coleopterists' Bulletin

Volume VI April, 1952 No. 2

TWO OLD COLEOPTERISTS

By Doris H. Blake

[*This is the fourth installment of Mrs. Blake's account of the two old coleopterists, Dr. F. H. Chittenden and Dr. E. A. Schwarz, at the Bureau of Entomology.*]

At about this time there came to the Department a director of scientific research in the form of an over-energetic man, E. D. Ball. He also was an entomologist, and, possibly because of this, his interest in bringing the Bureau of Entomology up to his concept of full efficiency soon brought about many changes. It was the beginning of the end of the age of the individual and the real naturalist in the Bureau. Under Dr. Howard there had grown up and come to full maturity a group of scientists not to be seen there since. He had brought them together as a body of trained and enthusiastic men and then left them alone to work on their own projects in their own way. The result was outstanding fullness of production of high worth. What Ball and his successors did not realize is that you cannot inspire either an artist or a scientist by holding up before him schedules of efficiency. Real genius does not flourish under such conditions. Regimentation of any sort is a barren soil in which only red tape and officiousness grow.

Dr. Chittenden was one of the first to be deposed. He came in and told me, "Johnny has been put in as acting chief of this Division." I suspect that in the past Johnny [Graf] had steadily refused to act as the Doctor's subordinate in the position that Pops held. Now he had been put in charge. Four days later the Doctor was out on the back steps of the Bureau watching a great truck backed up to the steps of Pops' building loading on all Pops' belongings to be transferred to Sligo. He pointed to them with his cane and grinned at me silently. He believed that with Graf and Dr. Howard in charge his ways of life would not be greatly changed. Yet he was humiliated. He raged about "that

scoundrel of a Ball. I would like to strangle him." And "I know I'm an old 'has been' but there are no new entomologists to take the place of the old ones." That was true enough.

His sister had evidently pricked his pride too. He came around to relate to me, "She said that I was an old, worn-out, broken-down man,—huh." He stood staring out of the window at Theodor Holm, the old Danish botanist, who happened to be passing. "His nose grows redder and bigger every time I see him, but he can get over the ground better than I can." Holm seeing himself so scrutinized came into the office to greet his old acquaintance. He had an insect that he had collected on one of his plants. Dr. Chittenden looked at it and said, "No, I can't name that thing." And Holm squeaked nastily, "Didn't think you could." For once Dr. Chittenden was humbly speechless.

Dr. Schwarz' 79th birthday had taken place in April, a month previous to Dr. Chittenden's deposition. I had slipped up to his office very early that morning with a bunch of wild phlox and golden ragwort that I had gathered from the river woods near Plummers Island, his beloved haunt of younger years. Dr. Schwarz was always at his desk long before the rest arrived. In fact he came to the Museum before the main elevator was running and used to ride up on the slow freight elevator. I found him humped over a box of insects as usual. He arose, as always, beaming and bowing and saying, "Good morning, good morning." "Dr. Schwarz," I asked, "do you ever have birthdays?" His old head drooped, "No, no more, no more." "Well, I have brought you a bouquet of flowers." He took them in his trembling old hands, "But how did you know it was my birthday? Where did you find it?" I smiled and hoped that he would have many happy returns. "No, I can't have. When one is 80, one can't have. It is not good to be old. One is no good. One must go, give up to the rising generation." I left him shaking his head and murmuring, "Thank you, thank you."

A few days later Mr. Barber and Mr. Fisher took him on a spring collecting trip to Cape Henry. Mr. Barber had found an interesting beetle down on the sand dunes, and he related how excited Schwarz had become. He had wanted to go down and collect some. In spite of their protestations he slid right down the bank saying, "I'll get back." But when the excite-

ment was over, he couldn't. Barber had to push him from behind, and Fisher had to pull him from above, till finally they hoisted him back again.

About this time the Bureau was humming with rumors of what would happen to Dr. Chittenden since Graf had taken his place. One was that he was to be sent over to the Museum. On one of my trips there I plunged directly into asking them if they had heard anything of our office affairs. Attention was at once brought to tenseness. Mr. Barber spoke, "Rumors have been so bad that I have not said anything to you for fear of saying too much." "What?" "That your Dr. Chittenden was to be sent over to us." "What do you think about it, Dr. Schwarz?" "I shan't be here, I shan't be here," groaned old Schwarz. As I left, Barber followed me out saying that there was talk too of Schwarz's retirement. Schwarz had divulged none of his plans for the future but once had said that he would like to spend the rest of his life in Mexico. Barber said, "If he goes to Mexico, Schwarz will quickly drink himself to death. And if Dr. Chittenden is sent over here it will be the last straw for Schwarz; he will go." "I will see Johnny Graf." "I will go to Rohwer," promised Barber. So Dr. Chittenden was not sent to the Museum. He didn't want to go anyhow. "They keep the place too damned hot," he said.

At last it was decided to move him temporarily into a little brick building out in front of the Bureau. His one stipulation was that I was to go too, and Dr. Howard has assented to that. I had never seen him so gloomy as at the thought of moving. Indeed it proved to be a fearful task to transport all his books and boxes of delicate insects as well as the heavy old desks and cases with all their contents. After we were at last settled, Dr. Howard came over to see us and remarked, "I wonder where they will put me when they want to get rid of me." "You can come right here with me," returned Dr. Chittenden. Dr. Schwarz was very curious about it too. "It is terrible, terrible to move," he said. His understanding and even sympathy were deeper than the others'. He was worried too over the collection, fearful lest it not be housed in a fireproof building.

For a while it seemed to me that instead of Dr. Schwarz drinking himself to death in Mexico, Dr. Chittenden would do so right

there in the Bureau. Never before had I seen him tipsy, but all that winter he kept coming in with a flushed face and was often stupid half the day. Some days he didn't come at all. Pops dropping in from Sligo one afternoon said, "If he continues to dabble in liquor he will sooner or later get hold of some moonshine that will do for him." Those were prohibition days. One day after he had been absent from the office for some time, I went out to hunt him up and stood ringing his doorbell repeatedly before anyone answered. Then the basement door opened and his gruff voice demanded, "What is wanted?" I descended to find him standing there with his face all plastered up, a great bump on his forehead, the bridge of his nose scabbed, and eyes that still had a blackish tinge. "Had a tumble?" "Yes," he answered sheepishly. "Shall I tell them you had a fall?" "No, just say a little accident," he begged. Another day we called at his house with our new little Ford car to bring him down. He had difficulty that morning fastening on one of his spats, so he tossed it back to his sister who was standing in the doorway. She immediately threw it back at him and they kept throwing the spat between them for some time till at length he wearily put it in his pocket and limped out to our car. We began to take him for short drives and little collecting trips which he thoroughly enjoyed. He would say, "There isn't another city in the whole United States as beautiful as Washington."

Gradually he began to pull himself together again and to study his beetles and become enthusiastic over writing a revision of *Curculio*. He came around to my desk to say, "My name will live for hundreds of years but that thing (pointing to Ball's office) will be forgotten in fifty years."

The only bright spot that winter was the celebration of Schwarz' 80th birthday in April. A month earlier I said to Dr. Chittenden, "We ought to do something for Dr. Schwarz on his birthday next month." He sat down heavily on the stepladder which I had been using and looked over his glasses faraway. At length he said, "I know what he would like and I believe I could get it for him,—a case of lager beer. I'm going over and talk to Dr. Howard about it." A few minutes later when I looked across the lawn to Dr. Howard's office, I saw his bald head gravely

wagging in discourse with the Doctor. Dr. Howard wisely suggested that it might "hurt" Schwarz.

The Doctor's next move was to write a paper in which he described a new species of *Sphenophorus* that he named *Sphenophorus schwarzi*, and, on Schwarz' birthday, he sent me over to the Museum with the type specimen as well as the manuscript and a beautiful ink drawing of the beetle. I found Dr. Schwarz sitting happily at his desk behind a huge bouquet of red roses with my modest little tumbler of wild flowers placed beside it. His hair had been carefully trimmed and he was in his best black suit with a white shirt. He looked ten years younger than usual. I handed him the box with the *Sphenophorus schwarzi* and he opened it eagerly. "Oh I remember that thing, I remember it. I am glad to see it again, I am that." He related how he himself had collected it at Ft. Monroe, Virginia, at the flood of spring migrations, when things were washed up. He wondered if it was not a tropical insect. He pored over the beetle, the manuscript, and the illustration and said, "That is a fine paper, a very fine paper." If Dr. Chittenden had been there I think Schwarz would have shaken hands. The Doctor was quite sober that day and as eager to hear of Schwarz as ever. After I had told him all about it, he had to go over to Johnny's office to talk it over, and when he left that evening, he said, "I think between you and me we have given Schwarz a pretty fine day."

But others had also contributed to make it a festive birthday. Johnny told me that all the girls in the entomology section had filed into Schwarz' room and each had presented him with a kiss, a great embarrassment as well as pleasure, no doubt, to the shy old bachelor. In the evening the entomologists had a banquet for him at the Cosmos Club. Schwarz had made a little speech in which he told of his early life in Germany, of coming to America, and of Hubbard. When he spoke of Hubbard he had broken down and wept. Dr. Howard had made a speech too and even Dr. Ball, and Dr. Ball had said that as long as Schwarz came to his office he would not be retired, that his desk would always be there.

That spring I spent a week at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge. On a previous trip, Mr. Banks, the curator of insects then, had not received me because I had come

from Dr. Chittenden's office. Old Mr. Henshaw had most politely met me and opened the collection for me. He had told me, wrinkling up his nose, "Banks doesn't like Chittenden." This time Mr. Banks had welcomed me and after he had ushered me into the long museum room that is always so quiet and deserted, he brought out the LeConte boxes that I wished to examine and gave me paper to make notes on. He was a mite strained though. I endeavoured to overcome this by chatting about the men in Washington, especially Schwarz. After a little he warmed up and talked. The talk lasted nearly two hours and afterwards I wrote down as much as I could remember. He told me that he had been trying to get Schwarz up to pay a visit to Cambridge in order to tell him about a lot of old labels and insects. He spoke of Schwarz' early life in Cambridge. There was some mystery about his leaving Germany. He had not finished his course at Breslau. Later it developed that Schwarz' people had not intended him to be a naturalist but rather a professor of philology. Schwarz could not continue in that, and quietly he had slipped away never to return to Germany. He had come to Hagen in Cambridge. Then he had gone to Washington, but when he had understood that he would have to give up his collection of beetles he was about to resign. Hubbard had persuaded him to stay and eventually he was allowed to keep his beetles. Mr. Banks then spoke of Chittenden with considerable warmth. He said that Chittenden used to "steal specimens right and left," and no one would show him a collection because he took so much. He wanted all the specimens, and if he couldn't get them he would go to Dr. Howard. Schwarz didn't like him. Chittenden used to get books from the library there and then vow that he didn't have them. Schwarz used to go about his room collecting the books when he had gone home, and the next day Chittenden would rage. Mr. Banks told how Chittenden had once thrown a paperweight at Tommy Kelliher, the messenger boy, and hit him in the leg, laming him. Tommy had threatened to go to the Secretary.

Later I asked Tommy Kelliher about this incident. Tommy had grown old in the Bureau and was now in charge of the silkworm culture. That afternoon he was down in the insectary garden gathering mulberry leaves to feed his worms. He remem-

bered the paperweight and "a lot of other things that the Doctor had fired at him." He said, "Mr. Banks used to be an easy going, bashful sort, but a real entomologist, just the same. He knew everything. He wasn't treated right here. One thing about the Doctor, though he is irritable, and a crank, and upset about little things, still he is always working on his beetles. He doesn't put on the lugs the way Marlatt does. Schwarz, now, is a real man. He always gives everyone the benefit of the doubt. He is always educating young fellows. There was Barber and Shannon and another lad who died of tuberculosis. Schwarz even sent him out to California and paid all his expenses. Anyone can go to Schwarz, and he will put his hand in his pocket to help him out. He is a grand old man," wound up Tommy.

When I returned to Washington I told Dr. Schwarz how much Mr. Banks wanted him to visit them, and how they had planned all the details of his stay here. Schwarz said, "Oh you terrify me, you frighten me. I have great trouble with my legs, I am literally on my last legs," and with a whimsical smile, "but I am afraid that I shall go." A few days later Dr. Chittenden called my attention to Schwarz shuffling along in his slow fearful fashion into the Bureau, and in a moment we saw Dr. Howard, Dr. Marlatt, and others gather about him to shake hands at this unusual visit. Dr. Chittenden stood staring across from his window. He said to me, "He has come over to see about his trip to Cambridge. He couldn't transact such important business without consulting Dr. Howard." I met the old man about ten days later on his return. He extended his warm hand to me, and at my inquiry, "Did you have a good time?" he said, "Oh my, yes, they entertained me all the time. They gave me a lunch at the Bussey and one afternoon I went to Melrose Highlands. I didn't recognize Harvard or Cambridge or even Boston." While he was speaking someone who had been standing in the dark hallway behind me stepped forward and extended his hand. It was Dr. Chittenden and Schwarz shook hands with him and returned the greeting,—the first time in years. But he turned again to me although the Doctor stood by listening, and addressed all his eager talk to me. Most of all he bubbled about the collection there, how large and crowded and unarranged, with

no one to work on it. He had seen Wheeler many times, but "not once any of Wheeler's ants." He couldn't recognize at all where he had worked so long ago. It had been in Agassiz's first museum, a little shanty with the collection upstairs and he and Hubbard had lived downstairs. It stood on the street where the first horsecar had run. But he had found there in the big new Museum the same chair in which he had sat, and the chair that Hubbard had used. In the old days they had spoken only French there. When at last his talk was concluded he said in a burst of friendliness, "Goodbye, goodbye, God bless you," and he shuffled off without once glancing in the Doctor's direction.

Dr. William Procter Dies

Dr. William Procter, 78, scientis and a director of Procter and Gamble Co., soap manufacturers, died on April 19, 1951. Born in Cincinnati, he spent much of his early life in western Connecticu, and retired from active business in 1920. The following year he established a laboratory on Mount Desert Island in Maine and was the author of sereval publications on marine ando insect life of the Mount Desert region. He was a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History, on the Board of Managers of the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology in Philadelphia, and member of several scientific societies, including The Coleopterists' Society. Dr. Procter had a summer home at Bar Harbor, Maine, and is survived by a brother, Rodney. His Wife died several years ago.

R.H.A.

BOOK NOTICE

KÄFERKU&DEFÜR NATURFREUNDE, by Adolf Horion, 1949, 292 pp., 21 pl., 169 figs. Vitorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

This is a beginners' book on the biology of beetles, covering all of the large families and discussing the common European species. It is well illustraed for the most part. Few of the illustrations are original, however, having been adopted from many European books and papers. It should prove to be a very useful book for the person beginning field work, even to sudents in this country who read German. Although the species discussed are not Norh American, the habits and habitats are roughly similar.

R. H. Arnett, Jr.